

Message Text

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45

ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5178

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SUBJ: ISRAELI LAND PURCHASE AND CLOSURE ON WEST BANK

REF: AMMAN 1639; JERUSALEM 471

1. SUMMARY. PRESS REPORTS CITED AMMAN REFTEL INDICATE CONFUSION BETWEEN ISRAELI LAND PURCHASES AND GOI CLOSURE OF LARGE AREA OF LAND EAST AND SOUTH OF JERUSALEM. LATTER ACTION OCCURRED OVER YEAR AGO BUT RECENT ATTEMPTS TO BUILD WITHIN AREA HAVE PRECIPITATED NEW PROTESTS. WE NOTE THAT ISRAELI RESERVATION OF THIS LAND, EXTENDING IN LONG ARC AROUND EASTERN BOUNDARY OF JERUSALEM, COULD PRESAGE ISRAELI DEVELOPMENT CUTTING LAST LINK BETWEEN ARAB JERUSALEM AND ARAB HINTERLAND (JERUSALEM A-010, MARCH 4). WE HAVE NO INFO RE NEW CONFISCATION IN NORTH JERUSALEM NEAR AIRPORT BUT PRIVATE PURCHASES SAID TO BE OCCURRING THERE. LATEST REPORTS INDICATE LAND BEING PURCHASED WITHIN AS WELL AS OUTSIDE EXTENDED JERUSALEM BOUNDARIES AND THAT ISRAEL LANDS AUTHORITY (ALA) AND JEWISH NATIONAL FUND (JNF) AMONG PURCHASERS. END SUMMARY.

2. THERE APPEARS TO BE SOME CONFUSION RESULTING FROM VARIOUS
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RECENT REPORTS OF LAND PURCHASING, CONFISCATION, AND EXPRO-

PRIATION IN WEST BANK AND JERUSALEM AREA. INFO WE HAVE OBTAINED ON PURCHASING SINCE JERUSALEM 471 INDICATES THAT SOME SALES TAKING PLACE WITHIN JERUSALEM BOUNDARIES AS EXTENDED BY ISRAELIS, BOTH AT NORTHERN (TOWARD RAMALLAH) AND SOUTHERN (TOWARD BETHLEHEM) EDGES OF CITY. WE UNABLE LEARN OF ANY NEW CONFISCATION OF LAND BY GOI NEAR AIRPORT AS ALLEGED IN STORY REPORTED PARA 2 AMMAN 1639, BUT PRIVATE SALES APPARENTLY ARE TAKING PLACE IN THAT AREA AND MAY BE BEHIND REPORT.

3. ACCORDING TO BOTH HAARETZ AND DAVAR, JNF IS AMONG CURRENT PURCHASERS OF ARAB LAND; DAVAR STATES THAT ALA IS ALSO BUYING LAND ON WEST BANK. THIS IN ADDITION TO PRIVATE PURCHASERS ALREADY REPORTED.

4. RE PARA 3 AMMAN 1639, WE HAVE MADE INQUIRIES INTO SEVERAL STORIES CARRIED IN LOCAL ARABIC PRESSIN PAST FEW DAYS RE PROTESTS BY ARABS DENIED PERMISSION TO BUILD ON LAND LOCATED EAST OF JERUSALEM IN BETHANY - ABU DIS AREA, ALONG ROAD TO JERICHO. THIS LAND LIES WITHIN VERY LARGE AREA DECLARED CLOSED BY GOI IN OCTOBER 1972 (SEE JERUSALEM A-142 NOV 2, 1972 AND A-001 JAN 4, 1973) BUT NOT TECHNICALLY CONFISCATED. REPORTS OF EXTENT OF THIS CLOSED AREA HAVE VARIED BUT OUR LATEST INFO (BASED ON MILGOVT STATEMENT TO RELIABLE ARAB SOURCE WHO OWNS PORTION INVOLVED IN CURRENT CONTROVERSY) IS THAT IT CONSISTS OF 70,000 DUNUMS IN ARC AROUND JERUSALEM TO THE EAST, FROM ANATA IN NORTHEAST TO BEIT SAHUR IN SOUTHEAST AND EXTENDING EAST TOWARD JERICHO AS FAR AS KHAN AHMAR (INN OF GOOD SAMARITAN). RECENT PROTESTS AND PUBLICITY ARISE FROM FACT SEVERAL LAND-OWNERS HAVE SOUGHT PERMISSION TO BUILD WITHIN CLOSED AREA. ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMANTS, MILGOVT HAS NOT GRANTED PERMISSION (IT NORMALLY DOES NOT RESPOND TO APPLICATIONS) AND IN CASES WHERE CONSTRUCTION WAS STARTED ANYWAY HAS THREATENED OWNERS WITH DESTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS. WE WERE TOLD ONE SMALL HOUSE KNOCKED DOWN BY BULLDOZER.

5. DESPITE PERIODIC RUMORS OF ISRAELI PLANS TO ESTABLISH ONE OR MORE SETTLEMENTS IN CLOSED AREA, ISRAELIS DO NOT APPEAR TO BE DOING ANYTHING WITH THIS LAND. THEY ARE EFFECTIVELY BLOCKING ANY ARAB DEVELOPMENT OF IT, HOWEVER, AND ARABS POINT OUT THIS PREVENTS EXPANSION OF ARAB CONSTRUCTION IN JERUSALEM METRO-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLITAN AREA IN ONLY DIRECTION OPEN TO THEM. MORE IMPORTANTLY IN TERMS OF SETTLEMENT PROSPECTS, ISRAELI CLOSURE OF THIS AREA MAY INDICATE INTENTION TO RETAIN IT OR BE PRELUDE TO THEIR DEVELOPMENT OF IT. SHOULD THIS BE CASE, FEASIBILITY NOTED IN OUR A-010 DATED MARCH 4 OF OF JERUSALEM SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT THAT WOULD PROVIDE ARABS WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO ARAB JERUSALEM FROM ARAB HINTERLAND WOULD NO LONGER EXIST.
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